

The prospect of a nuclear Iran has long been of great concern to the Western world. Yet, last week, when Iran began fueling its first nuclear reactor, the world blinked.

At one level, the lack of alarm over Iran's new nuclear status is understandable. At another level, it is astounding.

The Bushehr nuclear power plant in Southern Iran is to be operated by Russia and its uranium is only supposed to be enriched to "fuel grade" — far below the level necessary for weapons. Its purpose is peaceful energy production, say Iranian officials, and few countries, including our own, are willing to deny a sovereign nation the right to produce inexpensive power for its people. I am a strong supporter of expanding nuclear power production here in the United States and I am not at all concerned by any peaceful nation acquiring nuclear capabilities.

However, the current Iranian government has made its aggressive intentions quite clear. In view of President Ahmadinejad's taunts, threats and boasts, there is great cause for concern about Iran's newfound access to uranium and its developing capabilities to enrich weapons grade nuclear material.

In 2006 Ahmadinejad said, "Nations in the region will be more furious every day. It won't take long before the wrath of the people turns into a terrible explosion that will wipe the Zionist entity off the map...The basic problem in the Islamic world is the existence of the Zionist regime, and the Islamic world and the region must mobilize to remove this problem. It is a usurper that our enemies made and imposed on the Muslim world, a regime that prevented the progress of the region's nations, a regime that all Muslims must join hands in isolating worldwide."

It is because of this overtly hostile intention on the part of the Iranian government that a nuclear Iran should be alarming to the United States and to all peace-loving nations. Yet international opposition to a nuclear Iran has melted away and we are left only with assurances from the White House that Iran is at least a year away from having a nuclear bomb. The President's top advisor on nuclear issues has noted that "a year is a very long period of time."

But is that so? Iran is now the only nuclear nation in the world that is not a party to the

International Nuclear Safety Convention. While claiming that its intentions are peaceful and its only designs are energy production, Iran is already pushing to be able to enrich uranium beyond the fuel grade needed for its Bushehr power plant. It claims that the higher enriched uranium level is needed for “medical research.” And no one seriously doubts that Ahmadinejad has a clandestine program in place for the production of a nuclear bomb.

Last month, Congress passed and the President signed the *Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act*, which sets up economic sanctions on Iran, including prohibition of imports to the United States, prohibition of most exports, freezing assets of certain individuals and prohibition of U.S. government contracts. I was pleased to support this law because it shows that the U.S. will not look the other way while Iran pursues nuclear weapons capability. Yet while sanctions are necessary, we cannot expect them to be sufficient to deter the expanded nuclear ambitions of the Iranian government.

Sanctions have not stopped Iran from building a nuclear power plant. Sanctions have not stopped Iran from calling for the elimination of the Israeli state. Sanctions have not induced Iran to fully cooperate with international inspectors. Sanctions have not kept Iran from developing and testing a new long-range missile and bomber drone. Worst of all, the Iranian government has shown so little respect for its own people that it is difficult to believe that it is taking any action — including constructing a nuclear power plant — solely for their benefit.

I am convinced that the current posture of the Iranian government represents a grave threat to world peace and that the United States and the free world must remain committed to preventing Iran from gaining access to or developing nuclear weapons.

---

Editorial by Congressman Todd Akin originally published on [The Daily Caller](#), August 26, 2010.